

AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT IN CERTAIN CASES TO MODIFY VISÉ FEES

JANUARY 30, 1925.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. FISH, from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 11957]

The Committee on Foreign Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 11957) to authorize the President in certain cases to modify visé fees, having had the same under consideration, reports it back to the House without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

The bill undertakes to authorize the President in certain cases to reduce or waive the visé fees on nonimmigrant aliens. It should be clearly understood at the outset that the bill does not in any way affect the issuance of passports to American citizens, nor does it permit American diplomatic and consular officers to waive the visé requirements. The bill simply authorizes the President to negotiate with foreign governments for the purpose of making similar arrangements to waive or reduce the visé fees for nonimmigrant aliens. It is hoped that the President in exercising this power will be able to persuade some of the foreign governments not only to waive the visé fees but also to do away with the necessity of securing a visé.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs feels that Congress would not consider waiving our visé requirements in the cases of nonimmigrant aliens desiring to visit the United States temporarily for business or pleasure, owing to the almost insuperable difficulty of checking up these nonimmigrants after they have landed in the United States. Other nations which are not concerned with restricting immigration may well abolish the visé altogether, but the committee is of the opinion that the United States should not take any step which might weaken its present immigration policy or make it more difficult to enforce by abolishing the visé check on nonimmigrants. Our visé fee for nonimmigrants and immigrants is \$10, and nearly all of the nations have retaliated by raising their visé fee for American citizens to a like sum. For example, England, France, Italy, and Germany

charge our citizens \$10, and so do nearly all the other nations except Belgium and Switzerland, which have no visé fee.

The high visé fee may have been proper immediately after the war but there is no sound reason now for its continuation. It is a tax that weighs much more heavily on American citizens than upon foreigners, for our citizens may desire to visit a half dozen countries, both great and small, and would consequently have to pay more than six times as much in visé fees. According to the figures supplied by the State Department there were 112,196 American citizens who paid for American passports in fiscal year ending 1924. They were compelled to pay in foreign visé fees at the very lowest estimate for visiting three countries \$3,365,880. It is probable that the total sum would be very much larger. In return the United States collected \$687,850 in visé fees from nonimmigrant aliens, consequently the maximum total loss in receipts if this bill passed would not exceed \$687,850, but inasmuch as some countries will probably decline to waive or even reduce visé fees the total approximate loss would be very much less. In any event the net saving to citizens of the United States would be upward of \$3,000,000 annually.

According also to figures submitted by the State Department our Consular Service shows a net receipt of \$1,500,000 over expenditures, and with the passage of this bill there would still be a favorable balance of approximately \$1,000,000.

The greater number of our citizens who travel are of moderate or small means, such as school teachers, students, artists, etc., who can not well afford to pay fifty or sixty dollars for visé fees in addition to the \$10 for a passport.

It has been the consistent policy of our Government to try to build up our export trade in order to provide a market for our surplus farm and manufactured goods. The business interests of the country complain loudly that they are placed at a marked disadvantage in having to pay exorbitant visé fees for innumerable countries whereas their competitors, such as the English, French, and German commercial travelers pay next to nothing.

It is not necessary to state that great corporations and wealthy individuals can meet the visé charges much more easily than the average business man or American traveler. This bill is aimed primarily to relieve both the American traveler and business man from an exorbitant tax, and it is drawn up with the view of trying to persuade foreign governments to waive the visé altogether, thereby saving our citizens great inconvenience and vexation in chasing about to have their passports viséed by the various foreign governments.

The State Department has officially indorsed the bill as reported and urges its enactment into law at this session of Congress, as it carries out the recommendation made by President Harding and approved by President Coolidge. Among the chambers of commerce that have urged the enactment of this legislation are the following: New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Detroit, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Rochester, and other cities, besides the Merchants' Association of New York, and many export and import houses.

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